



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Considerations for Public Beaches

As some communities in the United States consider opening or begin to open public beaches, CDC offers the following considerations for steps beach managers can take to help protect their staff and beach visitors, both in the water and on land, and slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Public beaches (such as swim areas at oceans, lakes, and other natural bodies of water) may be managed by local, state, territorial, federal, or tribal agencies or private entities. Beach managers can determine, in collaboration with [local health officials](#), whether and how to implement these considerations, making adjustments to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. Implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, and acceptable, and be tailored to the needs of each community. These considerations are meant to supplement — not replace — any local, state, territorial, federal, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, or regulations with which beaches managers must comply.

Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind at the Beach

Closer and longer interaction with people who don't live together raises their risk

The more an individual interacts with people he or she doesn't live with and the closer and longer each interaction is, the higher the risk is of getting infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. These three scenarios show how the risk of spreading the virus at the beach can go from low to high.

Lowest risk: Staff and beach visitors stay *at least 6 feet* away from people they don't live with. Staff and beach visitors *do not share* food, equipment, toys, or supplies with people they don't live with.

More risk: Staff and beach visitors get closer — *less than 6 feet* away from people they don't live with but who live in the same local area*. Staff and beach visitors *limit their sharing* of food, equipment, toys, or supplies with others — for example, they share only with a next-door neighbor.

Highest risk: Staff and beach visitors get closer — *less than 6 feet* away from people who live in a different area** where the spread of the virus might be greater. Staff and beach visitors *freely share* their food, equipment, toys, or supplies with others, even people they don't know.

* Local area could be a town, city, or county.

** Different area could be another town, city, or county.

Know how the virus spreads and how to protect yourself

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mostly person to person, by respiratory droplets released when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes. Another person can become infected if the droplets land in his or her mouth or nose and possibly if the droplets are inhaled into the lungs. The virus might also spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose, mouth, or possibly eyes. Infected people can spread the virus whether or not they have [symptoms](#).

Fortunately, there are several actions beach managers can take to help lower the risk of transmission of the virus among persons going to public beaches.

Promoting Behaviors that Prevent the Spread of the Virus that Causes COVID-19

Beach managers may consider the following strategies to encourage staff and visitors to practice behaviors that slow the spread of the virus.

- **Staying Home when Appropriate**

- Educate staff and beach visitors about when they should [stay home or self-isolate](#) and when they can return to work or the beach.
 - Encourage staff and beach visitors to stay home or self-isolate if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, or are waiting for COVID-19 test results.
 - Encourage staff and beach visitors who have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days to [stay home and monitor their health](#).
 - Consult [CDC criteria](#) when deciding what return-to-work and return-to-beach policies to adopt for staff and beach visitors who had [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, who tested positive for COVID-19, or who were [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19.
- Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of being punished or losing their jobs, and ensure employees are aware of these policies.

- **Social Distancing**

- Encourage [social distancing](#)—staff and beach visitors should stay at least 6 feet away (both in and out of the water) from people they don't live with.
 - Exceptions should be made to
 - Rescue a distressed swimmer, provide first aid, or perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); or
 - Evacuate the water or entire beach due to an emergency.
- Limit occupancy of small spaces (such as bathrooms and visitor centers) to make it easy for staff and beach visitors to stay at least 6 feet away from people they don't live with.
- Encourage staff and beach visitors to carpool or vanpool only with people in their household.

- **Cloth Face Coverings**

- Encourage use of [cloth face coverings](#) among staff and beach visitors. Face coverings should be worn when feasible and are **most** essential at times when social distancing is difficult.
- Advise those wearing cloth face coverings to **not** wear them in the water, because they can be difficult to breathe through when they're wet. This means it is particularly important to maintain social distancing in the water.
- [Cloth face coverings](#) should not be placed on
 - Children younger than 2 years old or
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.
- Information should be provided to all staff on [proper use, removal](#), and [washing of cloth face coverings](#). Individuals should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to [wash their hands](#) frequently.

Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected because he or she does not have [symptoms](#). Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks or respirators. Cloth face coverings are not personal protective equipment.

- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

- Encourage [handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available,
 - Adults and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer should use one that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - Hand sanitizers might not be as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy, so wiping sand or sunscreen off before application might be helpful. Reapply sunscreen after hands are dry.
- Provide portable handwashing stations: safe (such as potable) water, soap with dispenser, paper towels with dispenser, and no-touch (preferably covered) trash receptacles. Portable handwashing stations can offer more opportunities for staff and beach visitors to wash their hands.
- Encourage staff and beach visitors to [cover coughs and sneezes](#) with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow, throw used tissues in the trash, and wash their hands immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, if soap and water are not readily available.

- **Adequate Supplies**

- Support [everyday protective measures](#) by providing adequate supplies, including soap and water, paper towels, tissues, dispensers, no-touch (preferably covered) trash cans, cloth face coverings (as feasible), and hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

- **Signs and Messages**

- Post [signs](#), in highly visible locations (such as parking lots and restrooms), to promote [everyday protective measures](#) and describe how to slow the spread of the virus (such as by staying home, maintaining social distancing, and properly wearing a cloth face covering).
- Broadcast regular [announcements](#) on slowing the spread of the virus on PA systems or by megaphone.
- Include messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent the spread of virus when communicating with beach visitors (such as on websites, in emails, and on [social media](#)).
- Find free CDC print and digital resources in a variety of languages in CDC's [communications resources hub](#).

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Beach managers may consider the following strategies to maintain healthy environments.

- **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces (such as handrails, water slides, door handles, and bathroom faucets) at least daily and shared objects (such as lounge chairs, umbrellas, life jackets, oars, kayaks, wake boards, surf boards, paddle boards, and swim fins) between users. Use disinfectants from EPA's [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#) [↗](#). Consult with the manufacturers to decide which EPA-approved disinfectants are best for equipment.
- Set up a system so that shared objects (such as lounge chairs, umbrellas, life jackets, oars, kayaks, wake boards, surf boards, paddle boards, and swim fins) that need to be cleaned and disinfected are kept separate from already cleaned and disinfected objects.
- Label containers for used equipment (such as life jackets and wetsuits) that has not yet been cleaned and disinfected and containers for cleaned and disinfected equipment.
- Launder towels and clothing according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate

water temperature and dry items completely.

- Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing them securely away from children.

- **Shared Objects**

- Discourage staff and beach visitors from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect or that are meant to come in contact with the face (such as goggles, nose clips, and snorkels).
- Discourage staff and beach visitors from sharing items such as food, equipment, toys, and supplies with those they don't live with.
- Ensure adequate equipment for beach visitors (such as life jackets) to minimize sharing or limit use of equipment to one group of users at a time and [clean and disinfect](#) between users.

- **Physical Barriers and Guides**

- Provide physical cues or guides (such as lounge chairs, umbrellas, or highly-visible stakes in the sand) and visual cues (such as signs or tape on floors or sidewalks) to encourage staff and beach visitors to stay at least 6 feet away, in and out of the water, from people they don't live with.

- **Communal Spaces**

- Stagger use of communal spaces (such as limiting the number of people in the water and breakroom) and [clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects between users.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Beach managers may consider the following strategies to maintain healthy operations.

- **Protect Staff at Higher Risk for Severe COVID-19 Illness**

- Offer options to staff at [higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness](#) to limit their risk of infection (such as modified job responsibilities that limit interactions with people they don't live with).
- Put in place policies to protect the privacy of people with underlying health conditions that put them at [higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness](#), in accordance with applicable local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal privacy and confidentiality laws, rules, and regulations.

- **Lifeguards and Water Safety**

- Ensure that lifeguards who are actively lifeguarding are not also expected to monitor [handwashing](#), use of [cloth face coverings](#), or [social distancing](#) of others.

- **Regulatory Awareness**

- Operate and manage the beach in accordance with local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal laws, rules, and regulations.
- Comply with local, state, territorial, federal, or tribal regulatory agency policies on gathering requirements or recommendations to determine if events, such as open-water swim and other sports competitions, swim lessons, and beach parties can be held.

- **Gatherings**

- Limit gatherings (both in and out of the water) if [social distancing](#) cannot be maintained.
- Stagger arrival and departure times to help maintain [social distancing](#), if planned gatherings must be conducted.

- **Staggered or Rotated Shifts**
 - Stagger or rotate shifts to limit the number of staff present in the swim area at the same time, but be sure to meet health and safety standards.
- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**
 - Designate a staff member to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All staff and beach visitors should know who this person is and how to contact him or her.
- **Communication Systems**
 - Put systems, consistent with applicable local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal privacy and confidentiality laws, rules, and regulations, in place to
 - Have staff report to their manager or the designated COVID-19 point of contact if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are waiting for COVID-19 test results, or were [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
 - Notify [local health authorities](#) of COVID-19 cases.
 - Notify staff and the public of cases, beach closures, or beach restrictions (such as limited hours of operation) to slow the spread of the virus.
- **Leave (Time Off) Policies**
 - Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable employees to [stay home or self-isolate](#) when they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are waiting for test results, have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days, or are [caring for someone who is sick](#).
 - Examine and revise policies for leave and employee compensation.
 - Leave policies should be flexible and not punish people for taking time off and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children (such as during school or childcare closures).
 - Develop policies for return-to-work after COVID-19 illness. CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#) can inform these policies.
- **Back-Up Staffing Plan**
 - Monitor absenteeism of staff and create a roster of trained back-up staff.
- **Staff Training**
 - Train staff on all health and safety protocols.
 - Conduct training virtually or ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained during in-person training.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**
 - Conduct daily health checks or ask staff and beach visitors to conduct self-checks (such as temperature screening or [symptom checking](#)), if feasible.
 - Do health checks safely and respectfully and in accordance with any applicable local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal privacy and confidentiality laws, rules, and regulations. Beach managers may use examples of screening methods found in CDC's [General Business FAQs](#).

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Beach managers may consider the following strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick.

- **Advise Sick Individuals of Home Isolation Criteria**
 - Instruct sick staff not to return to work or end isolation until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue](#)

[home isolation](#).

- **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**

- Make sure that staff know they should notify their manager or the designated COVID-19 point of contact if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are waiting for test results, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
- Identify an isolation room or area where anyone can go if they have COVID-19 [symptoms](#).
- Immediately separate staff and beach visitors with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) from others. The sick person should go home and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself](#) or to a healthcare facility.
 - Encourage the sick person to [wear a cloth face covering if it is safe for him or her to do so](#).
 - Open doors and windows to increase air circulation, if space is indoor and it is safe to do so.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you call 9-1-1, alert them that the person might have COVID-19.

- **Clean and Disinfect**

- Close off areas (such as isolation room, bathroom, lifeguard stations, or locker rooms) used by the sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#) them.
- Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Use disinfectants from EPA's [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#) [↗](#) .
- Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing them securely away from children.

- **Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts**

- Immediately notify local health officials about the person sick with COVID-19, in accordance with local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal laws, rules, and regulations. Work with local health officials to
 - Notify staff and the public of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining the individual's confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) [↗](#) and other applicable local, state, territorial, federal, and tribal privacy and confidentiality laws, rules, and regulations.
 - Instruct staff and, as needed and feasible, the beach visitors who have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days to stay home, [self-monitor for symptoms](#), and follow CDC guidance [if they develop symptoms](#).